

Meeting Minutes
Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired
Ft. Pierre, SD
September 28, 2007

Members Present: Rita Weber, Gaye Mattke, Ed Pinkman, Gayle Aamold, Steve Kelsey, Dave Miller, Larry Wheeting, Deanne Curran, Chuck Fullenkamp. Others present: Becky Blume, Eric Weiss, Brady Kerkman representing Kyle Kircher, and Sandy Neyhart. Members Absent: Kyle Kircher, Keith Bundy, Angie Boddicker, Dennis White Shield, Wesley Scholl, and Mike Klimisch.

Rita Weber, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. A special welcome to new Board members, Deanne Curran and Chuck Fullenkamp. Introductions were made.

Gayle Aamold made a motion to approve the agenda. Ed Pinkman seconded. Motion carried.

A motion and second were made to approve the minutes from the June 22nd meeting. Motion carried.

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Report: Gaye Mattke presented on the RSA Monitoring report. This report also includes Division of Rehabilitation Services. The overall results were positive. The State Plan was due July 1st. There were no major issues, but some recommendations. SBVI section of the report begins on page 25. SBVI had 3 days to respond to the report. There were no surprises in the VR section. South Dakota was compared to blind agencies in Idaho and Nebraska, and spends more on restoration (medical) and Assistive Technology than those two states.

Quality Assurance is a new focus area from RSA. Standards and Indicators were the focus of RSA in the past and SBVI is one of only 4 blind agencies that met all of them. Areas of focus for the quality improvement plan practices included Quality Assurance, improving wages and Transition.

The recommendations and findings can be found on pages 29-33 of the report. #1 Increasing Employment Outcomes for Transition Youths. The age for Transition is 14-24 and make up only 9-12% of all individuals who exited the VR program. The goal is to increase the rate by 1% per year.

#2 Improve the Quality of Employment Outcomes. This finding is based on wages. SBVI agreed with RSA to have the goal be \$10 per hour but then discovered they had already met that goal. The new goal is that the average wage be more comparable to the state average which is about \$14.

#3 Quality Assurance (QA). This finding deals with case file reviews and other activities. SBVI will need to develop a comprehensive quality assurance plan which integrates all activities and measures areas for improvement.

DRS and SBVI directors and assistant directors participated in a conference call on Quality Assurance Technical Assistance. RSA gave 1st round states the opportunity to become participants in a pilot project meant to improve quality assurance activities. Only some of the agencies who participated on the call will be selected to participate in the pilot project. States were given the choice of using #1. a national consultant/firm who does QA but not specifically for VR; #2. Clearinghouse at Utah State; #3. Region 8 RCEP through UNC; or #4. not responding. SBVI and DRS are

interested in participating and chose option #3, Region 8 RCEP. If selected, the Board will be involved.

There were no findings in the fiscal portion of the review. Everything was reported correctly.

The Independent Living (IL) program begins on page 39 of the report. This is the first review of the older blind program. Elizabeth Akinola from RSA met with a number of consumers from the IL program. The CCTV program was listed as a best practice. RSA suggested that SBVI work closer with Centers for Independent Living (CIL). SBVI met with DRS staff to discuss options for limited IL services such as grab bars or other services that are not related to blindness. Due to the reimbursement structure, it is not practical to refer limited service cases to the CILs. The IL program specialist met with Adult Services and Aging (ASA) to discuss their assistive device program. This option will help to meet the needs of most SBVI older blind consumers. Rehabilitation Teachers are to contact their supervisor prior to referring to the CIL's for services to ensure appropriateness of referrals.

RSA also asked the question of why SBVI doesn't open cases with older individuals residing in nursing homes. SBVI doesn't do this because of limited resources. SBVI's goal is to get older people to live independently.

SBVI assists Peer Support Groups with transportation, meeting rooms, and materials. RSA suggested in a strategy on page 46 of the report that CILs will provide peer support to older blind individuals. However, the SBVI peer support groups are self-sustaining and have group leaders who work with members and determine topics to discuss. It is possible

that those groups that are already established will not be interested in working with the CILs.

It was suggested to review providers and fee schedules with counselors and rehab teachers.

State Plan: Eric Weiss stated that the RSA on-site review was valuable in some respects. Monitoring began 6 months prior to the on-site. The State Plan was submitted and approved. The State Plan can be found at:
<http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/plan/08/2008.aspx>

The Strategic Planning committee took all the strategies SBVI developed for the state plan and as part of RSA's recommendations and put them into a working document for our own use. The Committee met by conference call on September 24th to discuss and prioritize the strategies into 3 year increments. SBVI is already showing progress on year 1 strategies. Years 2 and 3 need to be started on but will take more time.

Strategy # 5 of Year 1 deals with awareness and access to Medical Assistance for Worker's with Disabilities (MAWD). MAWD is an initiative through the Freedom to Work Leadership Council. Hoby Abernathy with the Freedom to Work project will be providing training to counselors at each district office.

This document is for internal use only and is not driven by RSA. Dave Miller suggested that 20 strategies is a lot and may be able to combine some of the strategies to make the list more manageable and easier for the division to report on. The committee will organize the strategies into groups, such as educational, policy, and process. Larry Wheeting made a motion to follow activities recommended by Dave to take the

goals presented and prioritize and categorize these goals. Gayle Aamold seconded the motion. Motion carried. Dave made certain that the Board accepted the document as written. The Board voted on it at the last meeting. Rita Weber thanked Eric for his work on the document.

Mentoring Program: Mentoring Day is October 17, 2007. Eric has had conversations with Shelly Pfaff with the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities to get more information on the Coalition's role for mentoring activities. Counselors will be the key contacts in the mentoring process for identifying consumers and finding out what career the consumer is interested in. Board members and other individuals may act as mentors in a number of settings including the workplace, when appropriate. Mentoring day can be more than showing the individuals with vision loss that they have the capability to be successful; mentors may assist individuals to be their own advocate, receive training to perform tasks, and live independently. Eric has shared information with counselors and drafted a letter to provide to transition age consumers to see if they are interested in the mentoring program. It was suggested to have the mentor fill out a biography form and possibly run a background check, if necessary.

Dave Miller will be speaking at the Rehab Center to kick off the mentoring program on October 17th.

It was mentioned that mentoring should not only be for transition age consumers, but also for those who lose their sight later in life. SBVI counselors will consider mentoring as an option for all individuals.

Eric will develop a "mentor application" form, a follow-up form for counselors and consumers who have obtained a

mentor, and information on procedures. The Board will finalize the procedures at the next meeting.

Client Assistance Program (CAP): Brady Kerkman presented the CAP report in Kyle Kircher's absence. CAP had 47 service requests for 35 clients. Cases are down due to funding decreases for travel. There were 37 Information and Referrals for 34 individuals. There were minimal clients from SBVI. CAP has received approximately 5 calls regarding the Order of Selection implemented by DRS which is less than anticipated.

Annual Report: Beginning October 1st, SBVI will begin working on the 2007 Annual Report. This report is sent to the Governor and the Commissioner of RSA. The Annual Report includes information on the Division, programs, data, Board activities, and success stories. Eric passed around other states' annual reports for ideas. Eric will do a draft report for finalization by the end of the year. The new logo will be on this year's report.

VR Program: SBVI is at the end of the federal fiscal year. The division has exceeded successful outcomes compared to last year. The number is about 100 which is 35 more than 3 years ago. SBVI has again met or exceeded all 6 "Standard 1" indicators.

RSA Management: At the on-site review in June, RSA went over the RSA Management Information System. The information can be found at <http://rsamis.ed.gov/choose.cfm>. Eric suggests Board members view this website as it shows how South Dakota compares to other state agencies. There are six links:

1. View info about your state - which consists of a variety of information;

2. Annual review reports - which is RSA's annual report;
3. Survey results - the results from a survey of stakeholders with their feed back about the on-site reviews.
4. Ad hoc query- allows the user to develop their own criteria for queries,
5. Publications and general information – which includes a user manual; and
6. Download databases – allows you to download the databases into an Excel spreadsheet for easier comparisons between states.

Each year SBVI submits data regarding closures on the RSA 911 report. This report is not on this website, but Eric would like to see this information on the website. The website has information from approximately the past 5 years.

The question was asked about the unemployment rate for blind and visually impaired individuals. Census data does not include disability-specific data.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey: Eric reported that the SBVI consumer satisfaction survey is just about finished. There is only a small sample so it is important to get a high response rate. Nicole Gregor from the Rehab Center and Becky Blume from the State office are making phone calls to get the information. This survey is a requirement of the Rehab Act and is completed every 2 years. There are three different surveys which are distributed based on where consumers are in the system. The surveys get input on Informed Choice, Services, and Employment Outcomes. All surveys have 6 questions.

Survey 3.1 was sent to individuals 6 months after IPE. It looks at the satisfaction level of Informed Choice.

Survey 3.2 was sent to individuals who have been in the rehab process for a period of time. It looks at the satisfaction level of services provided. There has been a significant change in the numbers over the survey results of a couple years ago. The previous survey scored 1.82 compared to 1.18 today. The lower number reflects more satisfaction by the consumers.

Survey 3.3 was sent to individuals who had been closed successfully. It looks at their satisfaction with their employment. Two questions with the poorest results deal with wages and benefits. The question was asked if a person is involved with the informed choice and services, why isn't he/she satisfied with the wages? It was suggested that part-time jobs and SGA issues could be contributing factors.

Eric noted that the general agency uses the same survey, and has had similar results with the wages and benefits questions.

Parent Connection: Deanne Curran presented information on the Parent Connection. Parent Connection recently received a 3 year federal grant for Family to Family Health Care Information and Education Program. The Navigator program continues under the direction of Nate Anderson. There are over 150 situations open at this time. Elaine Roberts is the Executive Director. There is a new guide that is published in conjunction with Special Education, Advocacy, and the Parent Connection. Parent Connection deals with all disabilities from birth to 21 years of age.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): The State Plan for Independent Living was approved by RSA. The link

is not on the website yet. The SILC will meet again on December 11 and 12 in Sioux Falls.

South Dakota Association of the Blind (SDAB): Gaye reported that the SDAB State convention will be held in Brookings at the Staurolite on October 12th and 13th. The theme is “Where Are We Going?” The agenda was passed around.

National Federation of the Blind (NFB): Mike Klimisch sent his report to Gaye who reported to the Board. Mike shared that he and members of NFB were saddened by the passing of Arnold Auch. NFB is working to get legislation for post-secondary students to get Braille books more quickly.

Native American Voc Rehab: No report.

Department of Education: No report.

Independent Living (IL) Program: Sandy Neyhart reported on 3 topics with IL.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey: This survey is not a requirement of RSA, but SBVI wanted to learn how consumers feel about services. The survey is based on a model from Mississippi State University. The questions asked if consumers felt more comfortable and confident in daily activities, paperwork, around the house/yard, in making decisions, etc. In addition, questions were asked about how staff were doing and the length of time between visits.

The survey was sent out to 212 consumers who were closed successfully between October 1, 2006 and July 1, 2007. 116 consumers responded for a response rate of 57%. Overall consumers were satisfied. 55% answered that the

Rehab Teacher visited within 1 week and 1 month. There were 18% who didn't respond. Sandy feels that some consumers didn't remember accurately or were confusing SBVI with other programs. With these results, Sandy is able to look at the responses from the different territories.

Sandy is also collecting mileage logs from the Rehab Teachers (RT) so she can monitor how many miles each RT drives and how many times she visits each community. Mary in Rapid City can only get to some areas every 6-8 weeks. Sandy also pointed out the county population of people over age 65 is a factor. Sandy will be tracking the information for a period of time. It was suggested that instead of sending a survey to consumers, use hard data to put in the report.

IL Program: IL active caseloads in 2006 were 354, and in 2007, 283. Closures in 2006 were 308, and in 2007, 328. Consumers served in 2006 were 507, and in 2007, 511 (number is not final but estimate). The difference in numbers may be because consumers were found eligible in a previous year but closure happened in this year.

Information was also shared regarding comparable mileage data that has been gathered which has revealed staff spend a tremendous amount of time traveling to the communities in their region. Some staff are able to travel to their communities every 4 weeks to provide services to people on their caseload as required by policy. However, staff who have large geographical areas to cover are not able to meet the standard of visits at least every 4 weeks and are able to travel to communities every 5-6 weeks. Additional concerns were discussed regarding the time spent providing outreach. If the Rehab Teachers have less time for outreach, there will be less applications for the Older Blind program. Board

members expressed concern about the decline in applicant and eligibilities. It was suggested to put comparable data findings in the monthly report to the DHS Secretary addressing concerns. At some point the Board may need to take a more active role in stating their concern with the declining numbers of individuals served in the older blind program.

The RT position in Sioux Falls was listed with Bureau of Personnel and 22 individuals applied. Eric and Sandy will be conducting interviews on October 2 and 3. There were a lot of qualified applicants in the list. With the circumstances involving this vacancy, SBVI hopes to hire someone before the position is vacated.

Peer Support Groups: There are 18 groups around the state. Edgewood Vista Visionaries is a new group in Spearfish. Rehabilitation teachers have set goals to establish peer support groups in Madison, Milbank, and Watertown again.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP): Gaye reported on the BEP in Jeff's absence. The Yankton Federal Prison has decided to discontinue the Class 3 vending machines due to a mandate by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Class 3 machines are the vending machines that the prisoners use with debit cards and these are the largest percentage of that vendor's business. The letter BEP received stated that the vending machines need to be removed by the middle of January.

EROS Data Center is under new management, and the new manager has been asking questions about a contract/agreement, why there is a blind vendor, and what information about the Randolph Sheppard Act.

Aberdeen Federal Building is still being managed off-site by a Pierre vendor.

There are concerns about the future of the program when vendors retire, and there appears to be little interest in operating a site by the VR program's consumers.

CSPD & Training: Eric has compiled the results of the training needs assessment that was sent to SBVI and DRS offices, Board members, and 121 Projects (Native American VR). There were 48 total responses. Out of those 48, 11 responses were SBVI staff members and 3 were SBVI Board members. The assessment is used to determine what is needed for training. This information is shared with the RRCEP in Colorado and they base their training on this information.

There were several categories on the assessment. Topics most desirable and training available included:

1. Ethics - staff must obtain 10 hours every 5 years to hold CRC;
2. Blindness related training - Doug Boone will be doing O&M training at the end of October, staff attended AER, and Focus on Success in 2008;
3. Secondary Disabilities such as TBI and Mental Illnesses;
4. Test report utilization; and
5. Disabilities related to aging

The State Plan outlines staff needs, recruitment needs, and training. Out of the 6 SBVI counselors in the state, 3 are CRC; 1 is pursuing a Masters degree; 1 has a Masters degree and is currently taking course needed to take the certification exam; and 1 is trying to find funding to start taking Masters courses.

Montana State University has a long term training grant through RSA, however, MSU recently reported that they could not accept the SBVI counselor because the grant is over capacity. There is a Masters program starting at SDSU but they are not accredited and don't have the funding yet. It is hard to recruit counselors with CRCs to South Dakota.

Director's Report: Gaye is on the School for the Blind Task Force to study the educational needs of students with vision loss. She met with Marje Kaiser and a consultant who recently retired from the Texas School for the Blind on Thursday, and the whole group met on Friday. There are 30 people on the Task Force. Currently SDSBVI serves 24 students at the School, and 107 students are served throughout the state. There are 4 vision consultants in South Dakota with caseloads ranging from 35 to 45. The ideal caseload size was identified as 15-20. There will be another Task Force meeting on December 5th in Pierre. Each member chose a goal to work on between task force meetings. Gaye chose transition and volunteered Eric for staff preparation.

South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind served 36 consumers in the skills of blindness area compared to 41 last year. The students are in training longer, increasing teaching hours from 6734 last year to 7073 this year. SDRC served 18 females and 18 males with average age being 40 for male consumers and 44 for female consumers. SDRC had 2 consumers from Minnesota and 1 from North Dakota attend this year resulting in \$17,000 in fees. Vocational Resources served 57 consumers, and employment skills training had 77 participants. Eleven students participated in transition week. Nicole Gregor resigned her position as senior secretary for a federal job with EROS. Bob Smith

completed his O&M internship and is waiting to do certification testing. SDRC had 2 interns this summer. One intern wants to go on for O&M training, and the other intern is adding a masters in vocational rehabilitation to her degree due to their experiences at SDRC.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The Board contributed financially to the activities during NDEAM. A schedule of events is attached, Board members are encouraged to participate in activities in their communities.

In the past, the Board has offered stipends of \$150 to blind organizations for stipends for individuals attending the blind organizations' state conventions for the first time. Those who receive the stipends report back to the Board. Dave made a motion to provide stipends again this year. Gayle seconded. Motion carried.

Gaye was in Utah this summer for a Region VIII meeting. A cooperative agreement with the Veterans Administration was developed for veterans returning from Iraq with disabilities based on discussions at the meeting. The veterans can apply for services from the state. The state may provide services that are not available through the VA. The agreement provides an outline for the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and the VA to work cooperatively in service provision.

SBVI received notice of reallotment by email. Reallotment is federal money that is not used by other states becomes available to those states who can provide the match. South Dakota SBVI received \$34,804 which will go primarily to client services.

SBVI requested \$46,436 for client services in the 2009 budget request. Once personal services were zero based the request totals just over \$31,000. Department of Human Services has had internal meetings and one meeting with Bureau of Finance and Management.

CSAVR and NCSAB will be held the end of October and first part of November in San Antonio, Texas. Gaye will attend both meetings. Eric and Rita will attend NCSAB.

Focus on Success 2008 is scheduled for September 30th through October 2nd, 2008. Gaye, Eric, Sandy, Dawn, Marje Kaiser, and Dan Boyd had a planning teleconference. They are developing correspondence to be sent to vendors and presenters. The conference will be held at the Ramkota in Sioux Falls. Vendors will be charged \$200 for a table. Non-profit organizations can share a table. The table fees will be used to pay for the social. There has been no decision yet on the registration fee. There are funds remaining from the 2002 conference that will be used for stipends for parents to attend. The next teleconference will be November 8th from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Aberdeen, Pierre, and Sioux Falls sites. Rose Moehring has been invited to the next teleconference to discuss deaf/blind topics and presenters. Board members are welcome to join the teleconference.

January VISIONS newsletter will promote Focus on Success. If there are any suggestions for topics, please feel free to let Gaye know.

Fall conference will be held in Aberdeen on October 17-19.

The next board meeting will be held December 7th at the Holiday Inn Express in Ft. Pierre.

Deanne made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dave seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Becky Blume.